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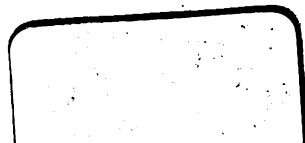
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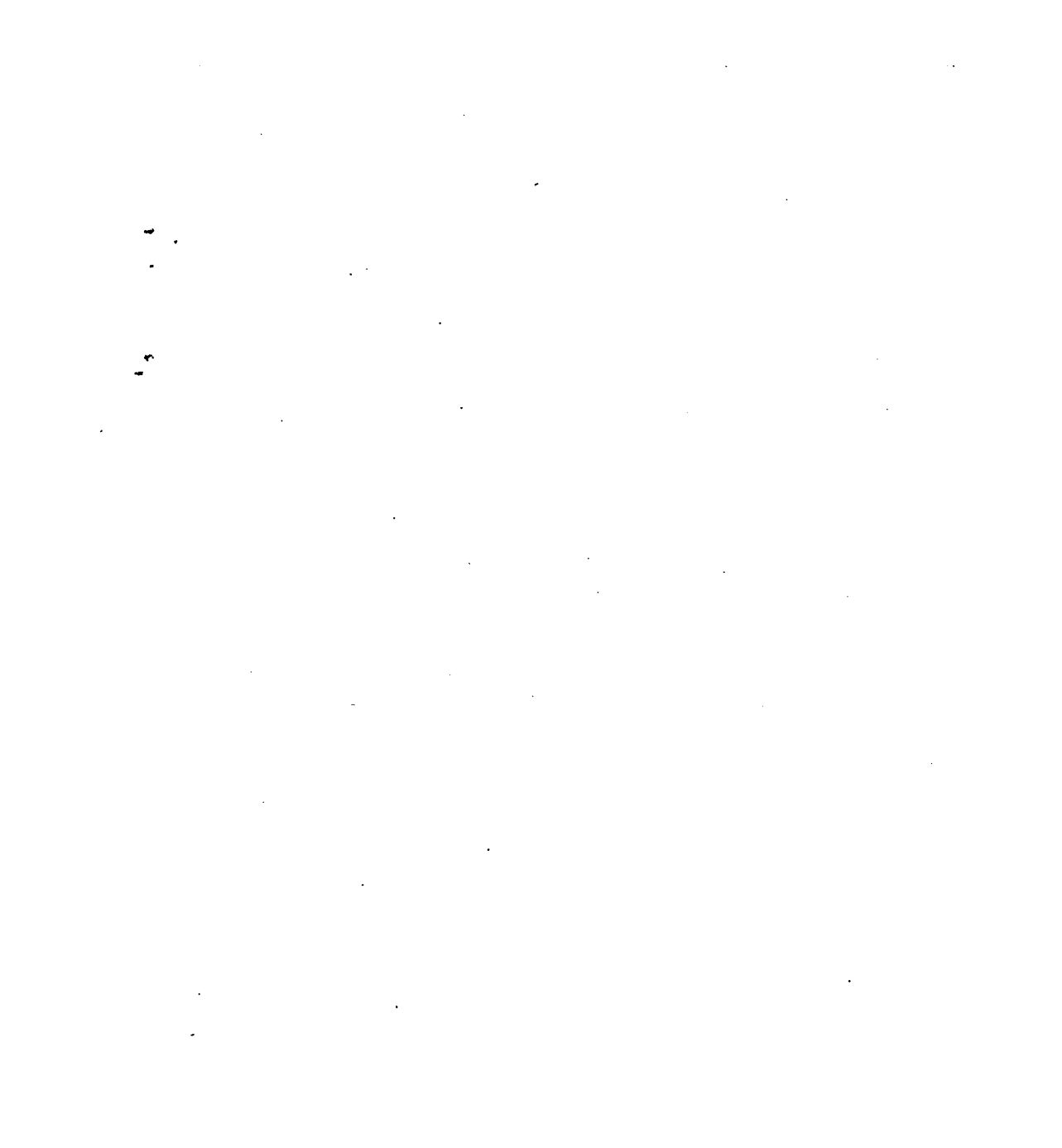
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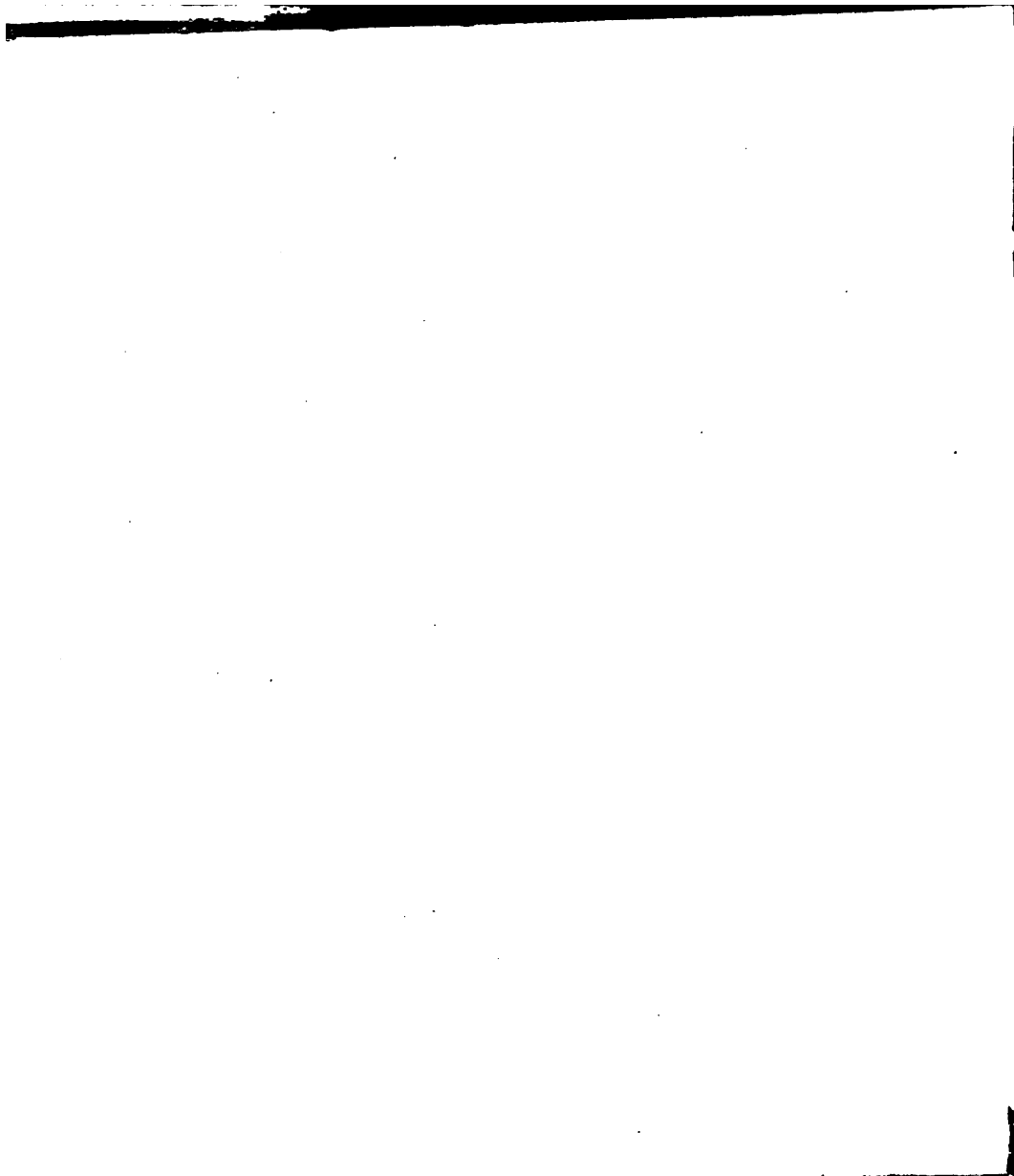


BRAMBLE CLOISTERS

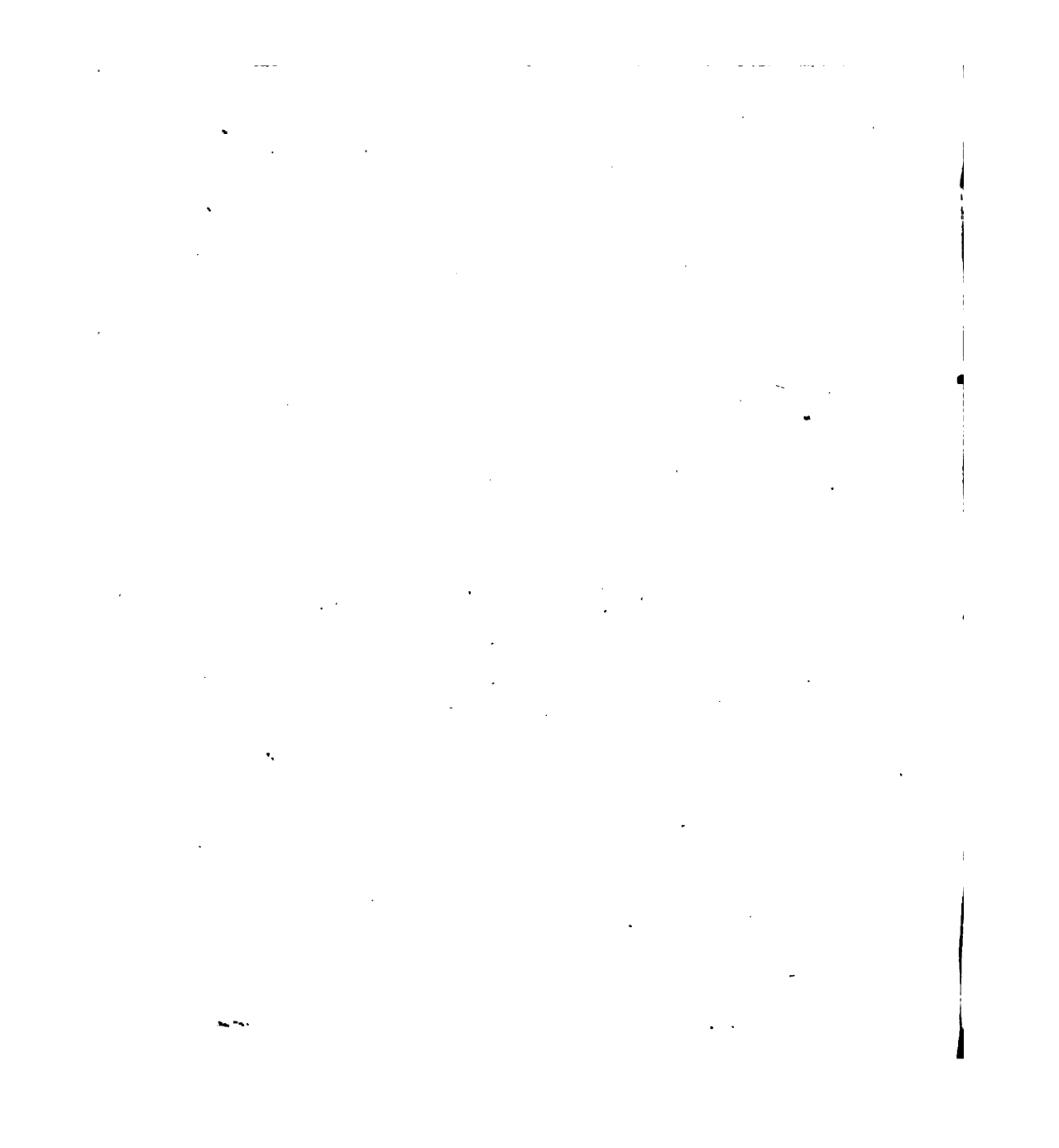






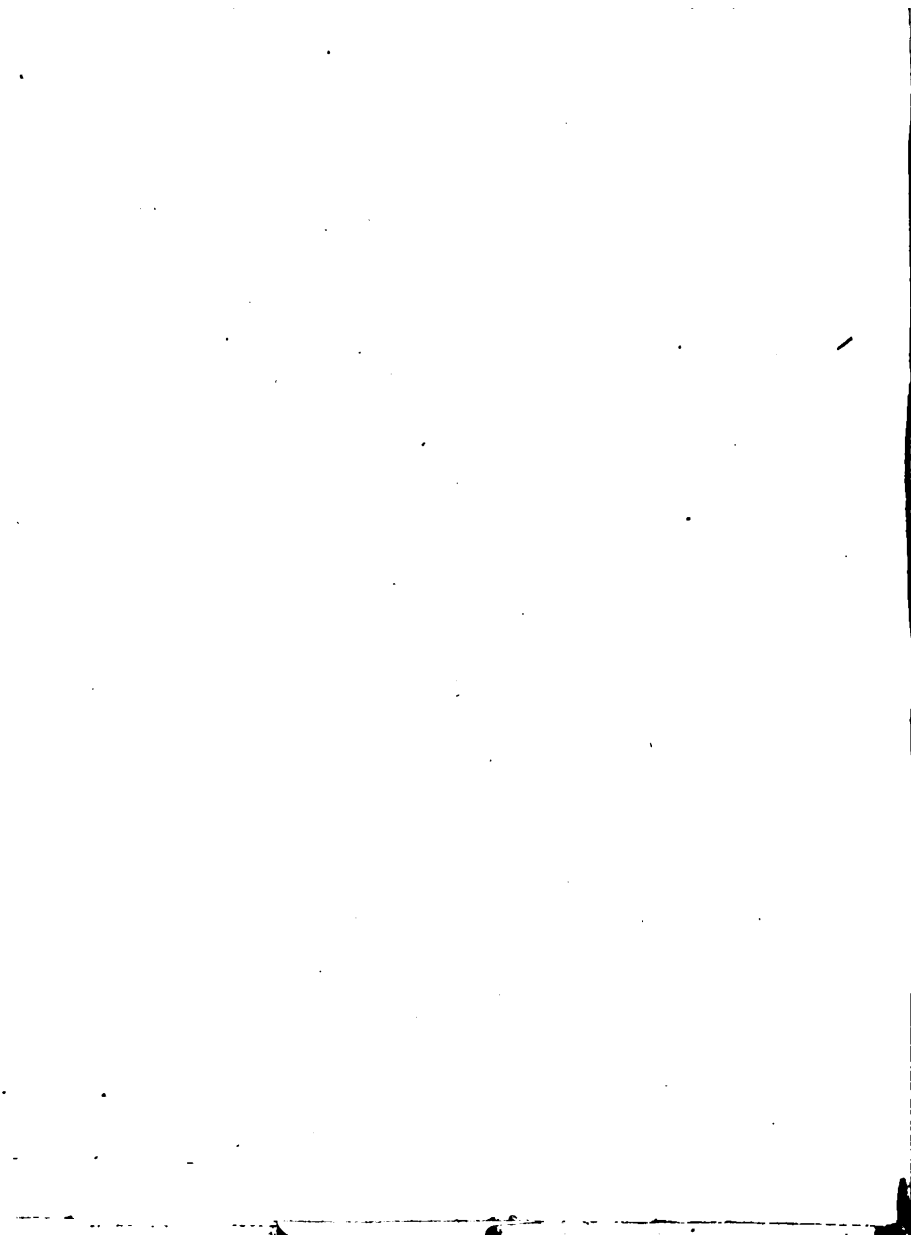






BRAMBLE CLOISTERS.





BRAMBLE CLOISTERS

BY

JOHN WATKINS PITCHFORD



LONDON: ELLIOT STOCK

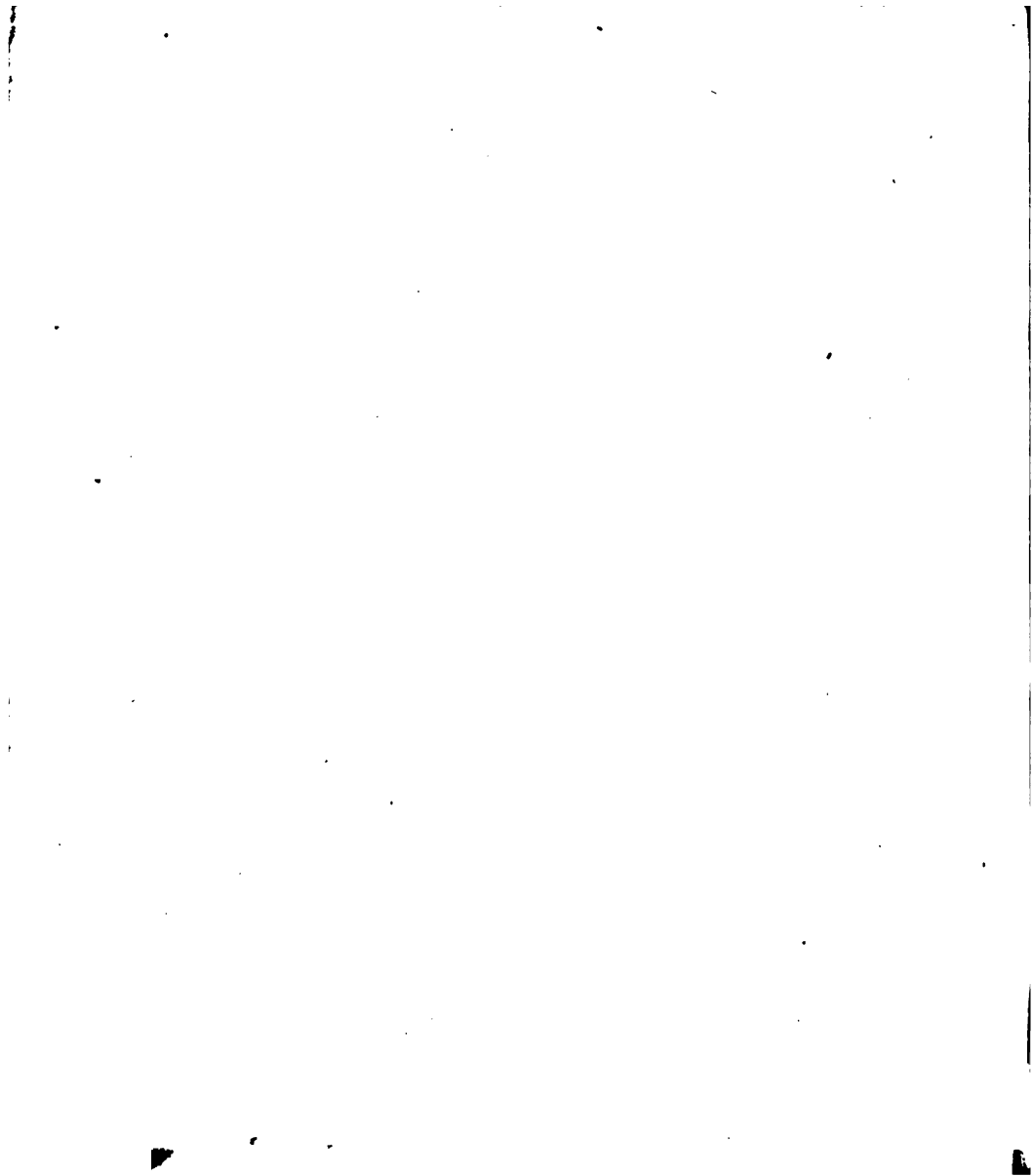
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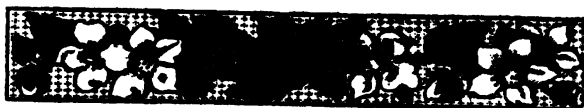


BRAMBLE CLOISTERS.

PRELUDE.

THE quiet thoughts that come in quiet scenes ;
The open country, and the free fresh air ;
The pleasant green of fields, rambles through woods,
Or deep embowering lanes, these form my theme ;
No high strung song of passionate endeavour :
Times are for noble flights ; not now :
Bright snatches these from busied prisoned years,
Sprung of brief leisure and for leisure hours,

And disengagement of the resting mind.
Conned in the ingle light or corner seat,
When shine the roofs with rain, and windows stream,
Or haply stretched upon the hillside thyme,
In the dear quiet of the summer day,
There may my book be read ; there let it breathe
Deep restfulness, and unexacting peace :
For I would have it like to a tangled wood,
Down whose sweet silences and dim arcades
Trip gentlest echoes of the rippling wind
Among the trees, with quiet slumbrous hush,
And piny smell, flutter and chirp of bird,
Glimpses of fields and woods and dim blue hills,
While near, in nature's sweet disorder found,
Brambles and vines and many a lurking flower :
A book of rest, of quiet pleasant thoughts.



NATURA NATURATA.

AS changeful as the ever-changing sky,
Fringed with light cloud or draped in sombre
gray,
Or with its limitless expanse of blue,
Serene, as 'twere the canopy of heaven,
Nor scarce for two successive points of time
Holding one aspect, so this mighty scene
Of universal nature ever moves



With ever-changing meaning yet all blent
In a sublime majestic harmony.
So worn so wounded in these later days,
By exigencies of our social life,
Hurry and worry, din and drive of toil,
The garden of the soul all trodden down
By crowding cares, indurated and bare,
We scarce can dream the primal influence
Of nature, and her sweetly moulding power :
Not then alone a blessed sanctuary,
Refuge, and cloister of divinest thoughts,
A temple, noblest, framed by mightiest Hand,
Where sights all lovely and all ravishing sounds
Should wake attention, and the rational soul
Stir to a yet diviner ecstasy.
Nature hath dangers to the unguarded mind,

Impure, unreverent ; the prurient soul
That in her cloistral gloom its garbage seeks
Occasion finds : her unclad chastity,
Her very purity but feeds the flame
Of base desire : satyrs with grinning leer,
And gamesome fawns glance mid her bowering leaves
And haunt her shades. No drowsy realm is it
That with its opiates drugs the rational thought
Bemused, a land of idleness, where sloth
Robs the unwary soul of her rich prize
Of high intelligence, and makes quick life
But living death. Even the guarded mind,
If not with reverence armed and purpose clear
To go beyond the external lineaments
To hidden meanings, may temptations find
To sensuousness, the resting in the veil,

Pagan idolatry of natural things,
Thrillings of sense, voluptuousness of sound,
Colour, variety, or changing grace.

Wouldst thou approach this glorious natural shrine ?

Then vest thee in true purity of soul.

Nature is pure as the bright mountain brook

That, sullied, leaps from rock to rock to find

Where it may leave its muddied particles ;

Pure as snow-crystals of the winter morn,

As piny breath of woods or budding flowers,

And in the pure and the unruffled breast

As in the glass of some pellucid lake,

Nature will image forth her loveliness :

With reverence too ; for the irreverent mind

Comes an intruder to her solitudes.

And as a hasty step or sudden sound

Will bring a silence in the beechen woods,
Hushing the woodlark's pipe, the linnet's trill,
And all the chirping chorus of the brakes,
So to the irreverent and worldly mind
Nature grows dumb, and empty silence holds
With but presumptuous echoes of the thought
Of the intruder filled. Nature is full
Of awe, as of the presence of her king
E'er mindful, and to reverent souls alone
Will she unveil the mystery of her world.
Nor only this : the mind must lend itself
To all the sweet enchantment of the hour
Full willingly, and with all reverent heed
List to the whispers light but full of truth.
Like to the field that with its icy clods
Hath lain frost-bound beneath the bitter sky

Through wintry days, if but the south wind blow,
And the warm sunshine kiss the bleak hillside,
The iron ridges crumble into dust,
The soft fresh mould awaits the sower's hand ;
So, in the docile and receptive mind,
The gentle teachings of the natural world,
The cloud's soft lesson, and the whispers light
Of falling rain amid the growing grass,
The still small voice that from the shadowy hills,
And evening's dusk-enveloped landscape comes,
Are heard, find lodgment, and rich harvest yield.
If thus arrayed, with mind and purpose bent
To meek humility, the gates will ope,
And to thy wondering gaze will be revealed
The endless beauty of these changing scenes,
Majestic pageantry, still fresh, still new.

Nature is ever fresh ; man comes and goes ;
His works crumble and rust, his treasures lie
Cobwebbed and tarnished in the dust of time,
But this great changing scene is ever new.
Rough autumn winds strip off the fallow leaves,
Fierce rains are flung from out the fringing clouds,
The soiled stripped landscape, desolate and bare
Sinks in the wintry snow : yet once again
The earth in all her virgin freshness smiles,
When at the gate of the returning year
The woodlark and the thrush with sweet shrill strains,
Summon the timid gentle-handed spring
With dainty loving touch softly to ope
The downy petals of the hedgerow flowers.

Nature is like some mighty scroll unrolled,
All written o'er with living hieroglyphs,

Yea, by a Hand Divine ; here may'st thou read,
Here reap, not gleaning a few scattered ears,
But all the golden harvest is thine own,
O glorious vision ! matchless loveliness !
World pictures, pictures of the unfathomed depths,
Star-sown, and of this dear familiar earth,
Wrapped in its tissued beauty, breathing quick
With throbbing life. Man well might wondering gaze,
A privileged spectator of God's works.
Shall he disparage, slight, or disregard
Count secular or tainted this fair scene,
On which the Maker hath approving looked :
"Behold ! 'twas very good !" thus 'twas declared :
Yet the irreverent mind that coldly looks
On the vast spectacle, th' external facts,
Sees only dull inert machinery. !

There is an inward light that glorifies ~
The physical scene, an inward fervid glow,
Like evening's golden light that softly bathes
With mighty tide the landscape's widest bounds,
Burns on the lake, and crowns the mountain's brow,
Gilds with its dazzling radiance hedge and tree,
And with its throbbing glory fills the skies.
The soul and nature are but counterpart ;
And blent in union with the exalted mind
Nature discharges then her highest functions,
And all endued with regal splendour seems,
Medium of intercourse 'twixt God and man,
A glorious veil to shroud the Deity
From man's too curious gaze. Vision sublime !
No idle pageantry, no empty show,
Poised a brief space amid infinity

To lure the curious mind, bemuse the powers
Inert : but in the goings forth of God
These are that stir to an intenser life
The springs of being ; not in vain they call
The wondering mind, and not in vain inspire
With awe the entranced yet conscious soul,
But bring it forth from its low narrow world
To roam these ampler fields : and here to learn
That man is one with nature ; that from him
Submission to her just decrees is due,
Co-operation with her purposes,
Oft dimly seen, tending to ends remote,
And in the drift, the mighty harmony
Of things created deeper rest to find.



THE IDYLL OF THE DAWN.

HUSH'D, indistinct the dusky landscape lies:
The mighty realm of night all undisturbed,
Buried 'neath level mists that brood unmoved.
The lingering warmth has from the western sky
Died out, and with it all nocturnal sounds,
Field-cricket's chirp, or song of woodlark poised
High in the air. The owl on down-fringed wing
Sweeps to the belfry, and the night-jar hies

To guard its nestless eggs. The whole land lies
Buried in gloom. But now the mighty change
Of the approaching dawn first token gives.
Across the eastern heavens a tremulous glow
Shivers, then sinks again to deeper gloom.
A tender light auroral gently creeps,
Lacing the eastern clouds, and with its flood
Of slowly growing radiance flowing forth
Fills all the orient arch. The level mist
With soft upcurling waves of fleecy clouds
Catches the glow, and the awakening wind,
As with a sigh of animation, stirs
Earth's cloudy canopy. Now throb and pulse
Far-darting golden beams through the dim haze
Of liquid mellow light, on which flecked clouds
Crimson and amber, float like argosies


Upon the reddening sea. Now roll aloft
The sun-tinged vapours with their beetling fronts,
As if to form a mighty portal, whence
The king of day may to his triumphs come.
The vivid pageant grows with splendid hues,
And ere the sun's first dazzling beams upspring
Earth's level roof of murky cloud divides,
And, in the tender awful light of dawn,
Reveals the silent and still sleeping world.
The shrill and lusty crow of early cock
Rings from the barn-yard, while beneath the eaves
Twitter the swallows. Soon the still small voice
Of dawn wakens the myriad slumberers ;
The white road's dust smells of the dew ; the air
Breathes fresh and pure. Now shoot o'er dewy hedge
Through opening woods, the sun's first rays,

Reddening and warm ; and with a thrill of life
All things awake : the hum of bees is heard
About the garden hives, and round the elms
The buzz of darting flies ; chirp, twitter, song,
Glad flit of hasty wing, the upward soar
Of joyous-throated lark, the blackbird's song,
Warbling in rounded tones, make sweet the hour.
Sparkles the hoary dew upon the grass ;
The trailing mists drift from the shining woods,
From out whose dark blue depths come gentle sounds
Of cooing doves, happiest of happy birds.
Cutting and diving through the freshened blue
Of cloudless heaven, the arrowy swallows dart.
Ere pale blue wreaths of climbing smoke arise
Above the garden trees from cottage roofs,
The satchelled labourers come with tools in hand



Bound for the hayfields or the distant woods. •
O glad and happy world, radiant with joy!
Where e'en the meanest least considered things,
Rejoice; yea, even things inanimate,
The glittering brook, the dew-washed flowers, the fields
Verdant with livelier green, the pleasant sky,
Seem all transfused with universal joy.
Rabbits are frisking on the sandy slopes,
With ears up-pricked in quaint and scampering fear;
Odour of new-mown hay drifts on the air.
The cawing of the rooks comes from the pines,
Subdued by distance in the sunny morn.
The hush and whisper of the brook are heard,
Amid the rushes and the quivering reeds.
With distant lowing of the milking cows
Pinned in the orchard. Swarms of flies on wing,

And gnats zig-zagging in the morning sun
With pleasant murmur fill the summer air.
Tapping of woodpecker among the boughs,
Rustle of squirrel, fall of twig, slight sounds,
Are heard distinctly in the morning's calm.
Swallows are ruffling in the dusty road,
Till stirred by step of passing labourer,
Who goes a-singing to his work. Hard by,
Young cattle play with interlocking horns,
Or, straying through the field towards the brook,
Leave bright long lines across the dewy grass,
Fast drying in the sun. Thick insect clouds
Brush the smooth surface of the gliding stream,
Past where the water rat among the cress
Rubs his broad nose, but at the faintest sound
Takes refuge in the reeds. The snow white swan

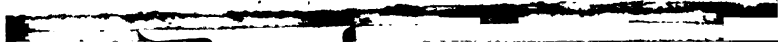


Proud of its stately beauty preens its wings,
Or with broad pinions lashes the clear pool
To momentary foam, again to float
Upon its dazzling shadow. Jingling teams
Along the highway pass, whose horses sleek
Stretching the crinkled flank, toss their bright manes,
With wide distended nostrils drinking in
The fresh cool breeze of morning, proud of toil.
With bleatings manifold in varying tones
The pattering flock goes by with nodding heads,
While sheep-dog's bark, or shepherd's high-pitched call
Rings doubly clear. Above the orchard trees
Now rides the sun, and pours o'er hill and vale
His radiant flood. The mighty world's astir.



THE BUILDING OF THE BIRDS.

ERE the sweet summer come with hum of bee,
And grasshopper's faint chirr is heard at noon,
When in the summer's dark blue settled sky
The balanced lark shakes his delirious song,
And ravishing odours float across the fields
From blowing clover and the blossoming bean,
In the fresh prime and blossom of the year,
Glad thought roams forth amid pure nature's wealth,



As happy as a goldfinch in the sun ;
When dropping diamonds of the passing shower
Fall from each spray, and, smiling after rain,
The sunny landscape lies freshened and still ;
Deep surge of woods in gentle undertone,
Twittering of birds, piping or chirping loud,
Or shaking forth a fuller bolder song ;
When from bunched oak leavesings the flirting thrush,
The cheery thrush with sharp shrill ringing strains,
With hushing of the wind among the pines,
And quivering of the fern as goes the breeze ;
Bright sunlight streams amid the moving boughs,
The very shadows live, the woods rejoice,
And all this multitudinous world is glad.
The small crook-legged fly with burnished wings,
Jewelled, so small as scarce discernible,

That finds a world upon the extended palm,
A forest in the glistening hairs that shine
Upon the blackberry leaf, spreads tiny wings.
Fresh scent of grass cropped by the grazing kine,
And horned honeysuckle's fragrant bloom,
Clambering the tangled hedge, perfume the air.
White swallows circling in the dizzy blue
Ride high aloft, or twittering shoot and dive.
Now is the heaven of birds. The well pleased eye
Follows the songster to its dusk retreat,
The centre of its little world, concealed,
Yet with melodious publishment proclaimed.
'Mid the fruit blossoms, apple, cherry, pear,
The tiny builders 'neath their fragrant eaves
Pour forth their life in song. The chaffinch brood,
Nested in fork of blossoming pink hawthorn,

All open-beaked, stretch out, clamouring for food.
The crested lark bowered in feathery grass
Or the field daisies, hides its mottled eggs,
Or in the young green oorn, whence taking wing,
In quivering rapture to the pleasant sky
It mounts, tells of its love, its nest at hand
With spotted treasures rich. The tiny note
Of the gold-crested wren betrays its home ;
A cup-shaped mossy nest with lichens bound,
Beneath the high and spreading fir-branch roof,
Swayed in the wind that sweeps with surly roar.
Here, on the ground, 'mid the dead coppice leaves,
Under a pent-house of red withered ferns
And tangling brier, the pheasant guards her eggs,
Neighbour'd with primrose blooms and hyacinths,
Where scampering rabbits pass anear at dusk.

When the red sorrel seeds, and the loose hedge
Waves all its tangled wealth of bine and brier,
Dog-roses bloom, and meadow-sweet perfumes
The warmer air, the russet nightingale,
In plummy world of swaying seedling grass,
Or when the glow-worm lights his golden lamp
On the moist bank, hushes the dusky night
With deep melodious strains of plaintive joy,
And rapture passioned as the soul of love,
Tells to the listening stars, with upturned bill,
The mystery of its tiny prisoned life.
The linnet's clear and happy noonday song
Comes from its home amid the crackling furze
And red-stemmed briars ; a world of sunny quiet,
With floating cloud o'erhead, and singing breeze
Where flickers by the loitering butterfly,

And in the sunshine of the golden gorse,
Come surly humble bees with angry drone.

The solitary coot amid the sedge,
Bent flags, and flood-washed reeds, and lily leaves,
Lays its black-spotted eggs where lipping waves
Of hurrying streamlet linger with their song.

Singing at leisure in the hawthorn hedge,
The blackbird hides, and from his orange bill
Throws mellow rounded song as 'twere the voice
Of the hushed golden twilight; to the world,
Silent and listening, all the vast dim world,
Unfolds its tale of love, tells of its cares,
The clay-built masonry with grass stems lined,
Thorn-bound, with infinite small labour raised,
Through the flower-smelling days of early spring,
The secret treasure of its little life,

The casket with its jewels of blue eggs.
Pleasant it is to ramble through the woods,
In cloisters green, sun-laced, draw easy breath
Beneath the beechen roof, well pleased to hear
The lulling streamlet of the dusky woods
Now troubling through its thorny brakes, or spread
In clear brown pool under the wide-branched oaks,
Where dreaming cattle stand, chewing the cud,
Tossing the head, or whisking swinging tails,
Or splashing fetlock deep from shore to shore.
Gathering its tune, the brook, like singing thoughts
That pass unbidden through the mind and make
Sweet music as they go, flows forth again
With crinkled waves where glints of sunshine fall
And glisten on the nimble minnow's scales.
Now in the glad and silent sunshine bask,

And hear the wind and watch the moving clouds,
Or rooks that rising from the roadside elms
Circle on high with peaceful clamorous caw,
Soaring and wheeling in the blinding sky ;
Or finch, that, self contained, is perching near
Upon the mullein stalk repeating still
His one unvaried song, then silent grows.
No fear of ill impending clouds the hour,
Or robs it of its brightness or its power.
Here many a sweetness lurks. The mind at rest
Responsive to all gentle influence round,
Obedient as the clover to the wind,
Feeds on the silent beauty of the scene,
Muses, and lets the antic fancy drift,
Like feather's tiny shallop on the stream,
Still in its dreamy reverie to hear

Bramble Cloisters.

Shrill twitter of the goldfinch in the elm,
The piercing smoothness of the robin's tone,
The plain song of the chaffinch, or perchance
Delicious warble of the willow wren :
Gather the honey from sweet nature's flower,
Find in her restful scenes power to forget,
Take heart, and smile away exacting care.





CLEAR SHINING.

COME, O care-burdened heart, harried and worn,
With life's vexations, and the ceaseless strife
Come, breathe the sweet free air, drink in the rest
That broods o'er wood and hill and sleeping field!
Forgetful of the past, as nature seems
This clear bright summer's day. The moveless clouds
Tell not of winter's murky mists and storms,
And stripping winds, dull, wretched, cheerless days.

The playful wind that makes the oak's vast breadth
Of red green leaves to titter as it goes,
Has all forgot the harsh and grinding storms
That cracked the mighty boughs and waked the woods
To surge with grief inanimate, to moan
Their ceaseless worry and unrest; all night,
All day, with roar like to the ocean, now
Dropped to a whisper or a pleasant sigh.
Nature has had her storms as thou thy griefs,
Her dismal days darkened with cloud and rain.
Yet has she buried all her dead, and now
With wind of brisk activity has cleared
The stage for the bright present, and the days
Brighter to be; on all the pleasant cares
Of living now intent: the yellowing corn
Tells not of when in dark November days



The tilted ploughshare cleft the brown hillside :
The past is covered, and the present seems
Unshadowed, clear, as bright as e'er was bright,
And as it now could never know a change.
Nature still holds with her vast family
Her steadfast way forgetful, unforgetting.

The subtle spirit of the clear bright morn.
Rustle of leaves, and drowsy sweep of wind,
And all the beauty of this breathing world
Have magic power. Now on the topmost bar
Of woodland lichen'd gate perches the robin,
Eyes his small world then pours smooth easy song.
The mounded underwood beyond recedes
Arched, with grey columns vanishing afar.
Whither away, O journeying butterfly !
On frail irresolute wing, coursing above

The silken meadow waves ; nor fairer scenes,
Nor sweeter meadow flowers are found than these :
A fluttering blossom on the wind thou seem'st,
Frailest of frail, yet in this blustrous world
Thou hast thy place, and nature's mighty hand
Defends thee well. What boots our fear and fret ?
Weakest of creatures teach the heart to trust
Nature's beneficence, her sheltering power.
Slow and deliberate her processes
Yet kindly she entreats confiding hearts.
The peril and the fear, life's weary toil,
Infinity of effort, slight reward
All incommensurate, life's objects reached
Too late, or with sore disappointment charged,
And mockery of the promise of the morn,
All, all are in the day, all work their end,

Through fever and through fret, through hindrances
Innumerable, dark clouds and sunny gleams,
Till evening comes, and brings its welcome rest.
Refulgent summer with green drapery
Of woods, blue distance, tawny breadths of grain,
Whispers of hidden kindness and peace.
The sunshine wheels around the oak's dark pile
Piercing the dim recesses of its shade,
As if it searched the unsunned depths to bless.
Through the green windows of the beechen woods
The bright rich yellow of the harvest-fields
Shines like a flame. Silently bountiful,
Nature accomplishes her many ends,
In all her gifts filling with cheerful hope
The mind else apprehensive, trusting yet
That 'neath the commonness of daily life

Are being evolved rich unimagined ends.
Afraid of nature? Wherefore should we fear?
That she is inconsiderate, or cold,
Swift to revenge, forgetful of her offspring,
And in the mighty movement of her way,
Her vast machinery, the single life
She counts as naught, less than the withered leaf,
Or mote that dances in the summer beam?
O trembling heart, an unseen power surrounds
Thy frail existence, e'en this mighty nurse
Of nature, in whose arms since infancy
Thou 'st lain, and in whose keeping thou art safe;
No passionless observer of thy fate
But kindly vigilant; and lasting gifts,
Rich compensations manifold are hers.
Wear on, O golden day, with chirp and buzz

And shifting shadows ; from the yellow corn,
Breast high, where reapers stand, the sickle's rush
Comes on the wind ; thought has its harvesting,
Its precious sheaves, honey sweeter than filched
By dusty-headed bee from fragrant flower.
Here, like as the clusters of the ripening fruits
Lurk in the yellowing leaves, what time
The brambles stop the path, so 'mid the change,
Endless successions of these natural scenes,
Hide precious truths to attract our lingering thoughts,
Shadowy suggestions come from cloud and tree,
From flower and blossoming field to allure the heart
To rest its weakness on a strength divine.



WHISPERING OF LEAVES.

ALL hushed and hazy is the quivering noon ;
Laden with odour of white clover bloom.
A happy hum of insects fills the air.
The woods are still. The charcoal burner's smoke
Drifts slowly, wide-diffused among the trees.
The echo of the axe sounds faint, far-off.
A butterfly flits past on wavering wing,
Or swinging steel-blue flies buzz to and fro.



An orange rounded humble bee, or moth,
Bright-hued, comes within range, then onward goes.
Now lights a robin on the woodland-path,
Hops, looks around, and flies towards the hedge.
The sounds of early August meet the ear.
The harvest-wagon creaks 'neath golden sheaves,
Rumbling away with softened distant sound.
Out of the silence comes the crack of whip,
Or teamster's voice : then all again is still.
Now is the hour when dries the morning dew
From off the grass, and 'neath the hedgerow elms
The cattle seek the shade. Through the low boughs
Come glimpses of the distant hillside-fields,
Where dots of white upon the golden brown
Show where the reapers toil, or stubble-field
Left to the scattered gleaners all a-bent

Lies bare. The floating seed of thistle down
Scarce visible against the blue, sails past,
Or poised awhile, balanced in air, with drift
Nigh imperceptible. Here towers aloft
An ancient wide-branched oak with mighty arms,
Deep foliaged, a noble pile of shade,
Cool and refreshing in the quivering heat.
Within whose lichened corrugated trunk,
Roughened and gnarled, mossy and gray with age,
The sap has pulsed for twice four hundred years ;
A history chronicled in twig and branch,
Slant of the trunk, and split and shattered boughs,
Canker and boss, and scarred and weeping limb,
And vast circumference. Whence came the seed,
The tiny acorn dropped some far off day,
Eight centuries since. Perchance some Saxon child,



Who hither strayed across the autumnal meads,
Dropped it in play; or shaken by the gale,
That through the oaken woods roared in its strength,
Torn from its hoar progenitor, 'twas flung,
And in the sodden ground trodden by swine,
When called by swineherd's horn at shut of day,
It lay, till at the call of the first spring
Opened two tiny leaves. Its tender life
Was at the mercy left of weakest things,
Menaced by puny foes, the squeaking mouse,
Or vaulting grasshopper, till growing fair,
The sapling spread abroad its praying hands,
For golden alms of the all-generous sun.
The hoof of browsing steer, the muffled paw
Of skulking wolf, wild cat, or stealthy fox
Prowling at night came near, or grunting boar,

Or rooting snout of gaunt and hungry swine.
Thus passed in sweet succession all the days
Of its first summer, and the winter came
Raging with storm and rain and bitter frost
Around the tiny spire from which the sap
Retreating, had found refuge in the earth ;
Till soft spring rains and summer's torrid heats,
Autumn's rude winds and winter's pallid snows,
Light airs, and genial suns had all combined
To give the nursling strength, and now it rose
Stretching its arms above the velvet grass,
While 'neath the sward the stout far-searching roots
Grasped their firm anchorage. Time brought at length
The wrinkled bark and wider spreading shade ;
Birds nested there, and through its green arcades
Flitted with chirp and song. The squirrel came,

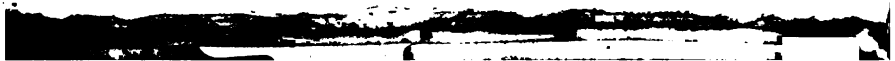
And frisked along the highways of its boughs ;
Here too the owl, his feathers all a-blown,
Spitted and hissed with eyes like coals of fire,
Or when the moon looked through the columned pines,
Ghostly and still, hooted in dismal tones.

Blow soft, O'breath of noon! bring from these tongues
Of gossiping leaves their secrets of the past.
Children with golden hair have played anear,
Amid the daisies and fresh-smelling grass,
What time the cuckoo shouted through the leaves,
Or whispering lovers stood beneath the shade
In golden dusk of summer's twilight haze,
Lost in their happiness. Here, when the sun
Poured his hot quivering ray at blinding noon,
The sunburnt mowers snatched their sweet brief sleep,
Stretched 'neath thy boughs. Or, in the double dark

In close and secret night the poachers stood,
Whispering their plots, when in the fern hard by
Rustled the stealthy fox, the rabbit stirred,
Or, from the pines or woody low-branched elms,
The night-hawk screamed and the cock-pheasant crew.

Eight hundred years, slow rolling, varied years !
A mighty space in human chronicles,
Lifetime of nations. Like the summer grass
Shining in feathery plumes, have passed away
The generations, yet the oak has lived,
Leafed and unleafed, spreading its sheltering strength,
Remained when thrones have fallen, and outlived
The many masters of these verdant meads.

The wisps of new-mown hay caught by its twigs
From passing wagon, stir in the light breeze ;
The shadow of a cloud drifts o'er the fields.





NATURA NATURANS.

THERE is a mystic element in things,
A solemn awfulness from which the soul
Surprised starts back. The blue expanse of heaven
Seems like a conscience in its purity,
As if its fixed and infinite depths reproached
The separate life. Before the veil we stand
And ponder nature's meanings, lost, perplexed ;
As one who pores o'er some strange manuscript,

The cipher lost. First elements we want,
Blending and touch, the grasp of mastery,
Yet secret relegation find instead,
As man were some lamed irrespective part,
Outcast and alien from the life of things,
This marvellous natural scene e'er moving on
Regardless of our notice and concern.

But yet at times the commonest scene unfolds,
Opening before the mind with strange delight ;
The breezy hillside or the woodland path,
The outlook over pleasant sunny fields
Wear a strange brightness, standing all suffused
In radiance not their own, but by the mind
Intelligent invested, seeming now
Like to some treasure house, its wealth of truth
Offered on every jewelled wayside thorn,



The glance of running brook 'twixt quivering leaves,
New buds of spring or pensive opening flower,
All trivial things, if aught in nature's realm
Be counted trivial, seeming cognisant,
And weighted with the destiny of man :
Not cold, unfriendly ; but a banquet spread
By infinite beneficence, a mind
Cognate, if far removed ; here richly spread
Are heavenly dainties for the hungry soul ;
The mightiest things, the issues that concern
Life's weal most intimate are here rehearsed,
Mirrored though dimly in the passing hour,
In changes fleet and swiftly wrought results.
Nor uninvited come : a thousand tones
Of natural melody drift on the air,
With soft appeals that ever sweetly blend

Luring the sensitive and shrinking mind :
A thousand graces, colours, gleams, and shapes
Await the thought that lingers in the gloom
Of sad reflection, the close prison house
Of hesitating doubt, brooding o'er fear,
And summon forth our wonder to behold
The solemn pageantry of this great world.
The freshness of the air, bland peaceful light,
The tranquil aspect of the sunny fields,
And the sweet silence which enfolds them all,
Unlock with gentle hands care's hampering chains,
Lift off the heaviest loads, and bid us rise,
Go forth and range in this great paradise
Of natural things, not with a mind restrained,
Caitiff, with furtive glance, but unrestrained,
Most welcome. There's a power that subtly blends

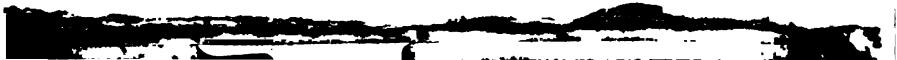


The reverent soul with this material scene,
Not to destroy the individual life
But to exalt, shaming its weaknesses,
And summoning from their dead and drowsy sleep
Natural ambitions, consecrating hopes
Most cherished by the soul, with sanction grave
Giving assurance to our confidence.

The larger aspects of the natural world
Chiefly affect the heart, with influence
Most potent, formative in its effects.
The distant awfulness of dawn, the light
That dies by pale gradations in the west,
Where on the horizon dark blue couching hills
Clear 'gainst the tranquil sky of golden eve,
Seem losing their solidity in gloom
Of coming night; the moveless clouds that float



In utter peacefulness, as if the world
At length had entered on eternal rest.
Sometimes the vast expanse of open sky,
The realm of light, unbounded, conscious seems,
Compassionate, with tenderness suffused,
As if it throbbed with mighty sympathy
For man's poor errant blind and fevered life,
The longing and the hope of human souls.
Or, yet, the mountain slope, azure above,
And the dim element of earth beneath,
Or starlit vaults of the imperial night,
The infinite depths startling the venturing thought
Until it shrinks to insignificance,
These work with ceaseless unsuspected power.
Yet nature ever shows a friendliness,
A graciousness towards the reverent mind,



Oft to the patient and observant eye
Opening fresh glimpses of her wondrous world.
We change : our life, surrounded by dead things,
Like to the lily's girdle of dead leaves,
Grows never old, though its habiliment
Wears threadbare and its circumstances change.
Nature has in her a perpetual youth,
Her beauty ever changing never dies,
And all her beauty and her youth are ours.
For leaving self, vain hopes that make the life,
Regarding with a not incurious eye
The beings once we were, unconscious builders !
And with strange pity for our groundless fears,
We yet rejoice to find the true, the good,
The beautiful remains, and we in it,
If but the soul in a diviner strength

Hold steadfast on its high immortal way.

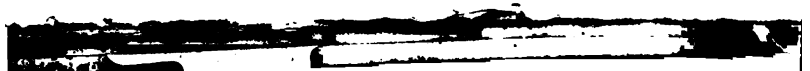
And not for this alone the plastic hands
Of mighty nature are stretched out to man :
These gentle agencies that rule the hour
Give sunshine to the soul and cleave the spathe
That sheathes the flower of pure humanity ;
Nor with a passive ministry alone
To gratify dull sense, the craving feed
Of sentiment, but in exalted work
To unfold a world most wondrous, formed and stored
To arouse, sustain, endow the aspiring powers,
Revealing all the inner life of things,
Stranger than all our thoughts, the further life
That with its secret force lays hold of man
Unconsciously, and with smooth onward sweep
Carries him to his unknown destinies.



THE IDYLL OF THE RIVER.

THIN buzz of flies, soft breathing of the wind,
That dying lives again, and brings the chirp,
Or whirr of hasty wing of passing birds,
Gurgle of water-tones in liquid flow.
Beneath the hawthorn shade, and fainter still
The distant crowing of a farm-yard cock,
Softer until at length inaudible,
These break the silence of the golden hour.

The falling stream, shrunk with the summer heat;
Has islands left, wide shallows pitted o'er
With marks of cattle hoofs. Here in the runlets,
The smooth by-water pools, the dragon fly
Hovers on gauzy wings, invisible
Till the sun touches their all-glittering hues,
Or gaily painted moth, on sidelong drift,
Feeble and flickering, flutters round awhile,
Or stops to drink on the smooth sun-bright wave.
Deep in the alders' gloom milch cattle hide,
Licking a mouthful of the lush green grass
With pliant tongue from the o'erhanging bank;
Or, standing half-leg deep a yard from shore,
Lower their broad square mouths to drink their fill;
Or, splashing in the water, snuffing turn
To lick their rough brown sides. The heifer stands

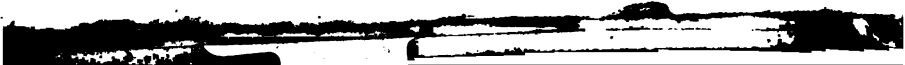


Out in the current of the gurgling stream
That eddies round its shanks with gentle noise,
A picture of most absolute content.
Cool river airs blow off with odours faint
Of camomile, and water mint in bloom,
Or meadow sweet, or plummy virgin's bower,
These come and go with quivering sounds of noon.

Eddied or oily smooth with circles faint,
Flows on the river to its deep still pools
Of dusky blue, and as a mirror clear,
Reflecting all the quiet of the sky,
But when a hawking swallow dips, or fish
Leaps in the air, then plumps into the stream,
Launching the tiny foam bells on their track,
On mimic voyage, quickly lost to view.
The streaming tresses of the water weeds



Wave with the restless current, while near shore
Green cresses crowd the margin of the stream.
Hawthorns and hazels on the hither bank
All intertwined with straggling blackberry briers,
Dog-roses fanged with thorns, and reddening hips
Just forming, loosely thrown o'er all the bine
Of white convolvulus with crumpled flowers,
Cover the slope. A fleet of ducks appear
In noisy colloquy, with yellow bills
Fishing neck-deep. The water-hen slips forth
Out of its wilderness of quivering sedge,
Blue haze of rushes stretching towards the sun.
In the low murmur of the drowsy noon
Comes there a deeper hush. The sweeping wind
Drops its light freight, bird songs and low of kine ;
Alone is heard the low faint water lapse,



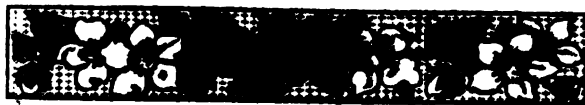
A querulous sound made where the moving reeds,
Down-pointing, dip their slender trembling lines,
Feeling the current, for a while submerged,
Then to the surface rising. Clouds of gnats
Play ceaselessly above the clear smooth wave,
Where lie reflected all the bankside flowers,
Mallows, or tansy, or red-seeded dock.
The harsh-voiced coot from out the chattering flags
Answers its mate. The king-fisher flies low,
A momentary patch of dazzling blue,
Skimming above the threading silvery stream.
Upon the islet's shore where willows droop,
Upturning their white leaves in every breeze
That moves the alders, squats the water rat.
Nibbling the juicy sedge. On flows the stream
'Mid surly hush of trees in the hot noon,



Ruffled or blue with its white pictured clouds,
Chattering and gurgling, murmuring plaintively
O'er pebbly reach, 'neath dark o'erhanging shade,
Seeking in vain for rest. Now through the fields
Beneath the open sky the broadening stream
Sweeps round, past where the patient horses stand,
With working ears and ever switching tails,
Or herd of browsing kine, disturbed, now mute,
Attentive, watching with a curious gaze
Th' intruder. The broad-headed lazy bull
Slow rising from the sward, stretches his flanks,
Dull-eyed, curling his tail upon his back,
And throwing up his fly-bepestered head,
Contemptuous turns, and slowly moves away.
But here a rustic bridge bestrides the stream,
Near to a lonely wood where clattering jays



Usurp the silence. Loitering here awhile,
The lingering eye searches the glassy pools
Formed by the current, near the opposing piers,
Deep, dark, within whose dusk are dimly seen
The feeding trout. In the road's grassy ruts
A chaffinch flies, picks at the scattered straw
Of feathery oats, then flitting to the gate
Pauses, takes wing, and drifts upon the wind.
The wistful eye roams down the streamlet's course,
Until 'tis lost to view in woods and hills
Shadowy, far off, that opening yield it way
To the vast ocean; and a sigh escapes
To think of yet another stream, whose course
Is all unknown. The shadow of a cloud
Sweetens the passing moment as it drifts,
The moment balanced in eternity.




THE DUSK OF THE DELL.

A roof of leaves : o'erarching trees, the beech,
The birch, or oakumbrageous, spread dun shade
From bank to bank, hiding the glare of day,
The hot white sunshine of the blinding noon,
Making the dingle seem a minster aisle
Solemn and still. The grouping trees uprear
Their stately columns to the twinkling leaves ;
While beams of golden sunlight shoot athwart




The purple gloom. The dim cool light suffused
Broods on the lurking shade, mosaic wrought
With dappled patches of its moving gold
Flecking the velvet sward, as now the wind
Lifts up the green veined leaves and gives the sun
Swift glimpses of the deep secluded dell.
A brook meandering winds its devious course,
Babbling through mossy stones, till it expands
Into a broad deep pool whose moveless calm
Unswayed by breeze intrusive mirrors heaven,
Where clouds serenely sailing deck the blue.
The drinking bird, or now the leaping fish
Make tiny widening undulations round
The woodland mimic lake, till reaching shore
About the roots of bending ash, tall flag,
Or tangling brier the wave finds rest. The birch,



Willow, or silent quivering aspen hang
Over their shadows ; here in few short weeks
Cinctured with reddening leaves autumn will come,
Pensive, and sicklied with approaching death,
And with gaunt fingers of its passionate blasts
Strip from the drooping boughs their withering gear,
And strew the pool ; unruffled now all stand
In their full summer beauty leaf and flower.

The rabbit, startled by the passing foot,
Leaps from the fern ; the noisy jay, the quest,
Disturbed, among the interlacing boughs,
Sweep through the cloistering trees on twinkling wing,
And in the tangled distance soon are lost.

The poets of antiquity have feigned
Such spots, so cool, sequestered and embowered
As if belonging to another world.




Where trooped the dryads, where amid the leaves
Quivering in sunlight laughing satyrs peeped ;
Thither, when shone in heaven the clear cold moon,
Light fays beneath the ferns and foxglove bells
Tripped to the music of the nightingale.
Here sure is Flora's home, and hither come
In countless multitudes her subjects fair,
Robed in all hues to meet their lovelier queen,
And with their offerings of incense sweet
Blowing their faint perfumes in fragrant clouds
That catch the enraptured sense, their honours pay.
Hither in spring-time come the violets,
The early primrose, and the pasque flower faint,
Or wood anemone, the hyacinths
Covering the lofty banks with blueish haze,
A fair expanse of flowers like to the sky,



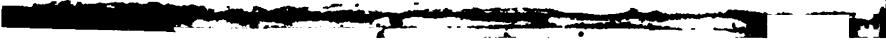
Azure, adorned with patches of white cloud.
As if the spirit of the dewy gloom,
Rises the foxglove's spire, itself a presence,
What time the wild rose drops, or clematis
Steals into blossom, clambering o'er the hedge.
In autumn, berries of the mountain ash
And scarlet haws gleam through the browning leaves,
While lingering yet the wild geranium peeps
'Mid sloping banks of fern and shady brakes,
Where shines the blackberry, and where in spring
Bursts forth the glad surprise of hawthorn bloom,
Sweetest of flowers bearing the sweetest name
Of all the months, and with its speckled snow
Perfuming far and wide the brooding air,
Or where, when sultry June hushes the fields,
The honeysuckle wreathes its fragrant horn :

Hither resort the birds : the willow wren,
Woodlark and blackbird make their secret home,
And unalarmed, flit in and out, and plume
Their wings, then shaking on the silent air
Sweet thrilling notes till all the valley rings,
Echoing their joy ; while safely in the shade
The mother bird sits brooding o'er her eggs,
Nor dreads intrusive sound nor pilfering hand.

A gentle sound almost inaudible
Of trickling waters through the mossy ground
Allures the steps towards a natural spring.
Climbing the steep ascent, more slippery made
By the escaping tiny water threads,
'Mid pebbles, earth, and intercepting leaves,
The fount is reached, the original well-head spring.
A sloping bank confines on either side,



Fringed with fair drapery of graceful fern
Depending from above, ivy and moss,
And tufts of drooping grass. In front the rock
Broken projects its bold entablature
Above the nook where hides the lurking fount.
No art on marble lavishing its thought
Till from the dull stone rise nereids, nymphs,
Dolphins and tritons stout, with flowing lines
As if the marble flowed, bedecks this fount
With beauty. Ages since, these old red rocks
Forged on the anvil of a flaming world,
Uprose. Time since has stained and tinted them,
With moss fantastic draped and lichens grey,
Clothing their rude exterior. Scooped below
A natural basin angular and and rough,
Edged with green cress and moss receives the wave,



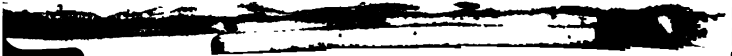
Brighter than morning dewdrops or than pearls
Fished from the oozy depths of Eastern seas,
The liquid drops distil, and through the rock
Hollowed above the fount, mantled with moss,
Weep silently, glisten among the leaves,
And dripping, tinkling, break with lines
Of wavy light the water's glassy calm.

Beneath the mimic sea, more clearly shown
With every movement of the tiny waves,
Twigs, pebbles, matted leaves, an acorn cup,
The hand of chance contingent here has strewn.

With liquid melody the new-born stream
Winds slowly, smoothly, on its devious course,
Till interrupted by green shifting cress,
Tall sedge, long lines of waving weed where lurks
The lamprey, starting with redoubled force

Hurrying it flows, as if it heard the call
Of the hoarse ocean, bidding it to leave
Its troubled waterfalls to find a rest
In the wide deep, its origin, its home.

Pleasant it is to stand, to lean against
The rugged stem of some old tree, and muse,
Here in the home of silence and of rest,
Feeding the quiet mind with quiet thoughts
The simple goings on of nature breed.
What gentle sounds arise so sweetly blend
So softly die as if they ne'er had been :
The hum of bees, the sighing of the wind,
Fluttering of leaves, the undersong of birds,
Wood pigeons in the distance with low notes,
The liquid soft complaint of hidden streams.
Excluded is the city's noisy din."



The Dusk of the Dell.

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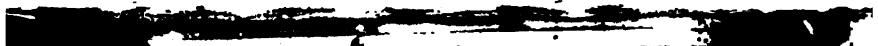
Few sounds that tell of human life intrude,
But when the breeze, with bleat of early lamb,
Brings up the ploughboy's whistle, or the sounds,
In later months, of sickle or of scythe,
From fragrant hayfields or the red brown corn.





THE BLOWING OF THE CLOVER.

THE kindness of nature never fails.
O fresh sweet summer breeze, that with a sigh
Of infinite peace breathes o'er the shining fields,
Breathes o'er the million clover bolls that bow
In homage to your passing might, a voice
Comes in your echoes sweet to tell to man
Of nature's virgin freshness, of her stores
Of ravishing fragrance, her beneficence



The Blowing of the Clover.

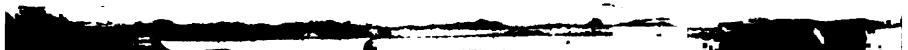
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That robes in this bright hour all things with gold.
Here in the unbounded heaven, the ample field
Of her vast purposes, frail mortal man
Seems like yon tiny bird that high o'erhead
Swims in the glory of the summer noon,
A speck, a particle, in the vast flood,
That now invisible, yet by sweet song
In sunny quiet of the golden day,
Is present still. So great a lesson seems
All worthy of our care. For oft the fear
Darkens the mind that yet the hour must come
That we must sink from bright, strong, stirring life
To weakness, vile inaction, sick-room smells,
Dependence, weariness, repulsive death.
O dismal road! Is nature then less kind
As years go by, lavish with gifts to lure

The young, the trustful heart along life's path,
But failing her poor pensioners when most
They need her kindness. Or is it so?
Or why should nature be so kind in life
And not in death, or why embitter sore
The dusty way to death, which they must trudge
Whom now she needs no longer? Thus I mused
Till the white clover poured its sweetness forth
Again upon the air, and brought withal
A sense as if of shame, gentle reproach
That in this wondrous world the sentient mind
Should in its secret thought demean itself,
And hesitating stand without this realm,
A stranger, a mere alien, not a son,
Should pitifully glean from passing glance,
From trivial changes in the natural scene,

Of opening bud, sere leaf, or dropping flower,
Daybreak, or shifting shadows, dying eve,
The mighty laws that hedge life's destiny ;
One with the flower or drifting thistledown,
That poises on the viewless stream of air,
And yet not one, but with the wider range
Of reason, and the ampler field of hope,
The conscious elevation of the power,
Awful and godlike, that compares, rejects,
And with full acquiescence and free choice
Resolves on good. Yet, not in vain, ye flowers,
Sweet-breathing, fresh, ye preach your voiceless gospel,
Not in vain, ye sweet-voiced choristers,
Your pure high strains piercing these cloistral shades ;
Ye humble servitors in nature's fane,
The busy brook that mid the brambles shines,

Flowers of the thorny brake, or plumes of grass,
Fringed lichens of the corrugated oak,
And all the myriad moving woodland leaves,
Not vain your influence unconsciously
Thrown forth to guide the mind intelligent
That seeks for union more intimate,
Or, if that such a hope too daring seem,
That seeks the knowledge of the Mind Supreme.





THE QUIET OF THE HILLS.

ABSOLUTE quiet ! perfect, utter rest
Broods over all these broad and open hills.
Depths beyond depths of peace are in yon sky,
Upon whose placid breast the feathery cloud
So lightly balanced rests as if it slept,
Exalted high above this noisy world,
Above the fretful currents of the wind,
By viewless hands aerial upborne.

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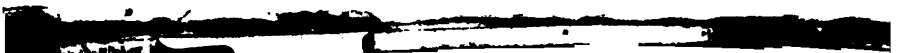
But how can I with this rude pen bring in
The mighty quiet and the utter rest ;
How breathe in these dead words the soul of peace,
That makes a heaven upon these lonely hills ;
Filch from the pure exhilarating breeze
The secret power that strengthens while it calms,
Uplifted high, the noises from the plain
Seem all inaudible, lost in the depths
Of intervening air ; there, far below,
The tiny horses and the tinier men
Creep slowly, noiselessly, across the fields,
As in a dream ; but when the wind awakes,
Sweeping among the bents and harebells near,
Then may be heard the sounds far off and faint
Tinkling, diminished, like the pining song
Of dancing gnats, so small they scarce can reach

The Quiet of the Hills.

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The shore of audible sense; faint bark of dog,
Or pit of hoofs upon the far white road,
Or faint halloo; then all again is still.
Absolute quiet! perfect, utter rest
Broods over all these broad and open hills.
The heaven is all our own in amplest breadth,
Vast canopy, wide fields of placid air,
An all-protecting hovering tenderness,
That smiles and secret benediction gives.
The sun is on the hills; invisible
Warm breath of thymy odours floats abroad,
With fragrance of innumerable flowers,
Wild unconsidered nurslings of the hills,
Hiding among the moss and cowslip roots.
Now comes the whisper of the hills again,
As if the vast earth sighed with deep content,

Or sought a listening ear in which to pour
Its last uneasy secret ere it turned
And to profoundest slumber dropped. Tells it
Of ravaging storm, when through these airy depths
The clash of tempest raged, and in the night
Wrestled wild winds, and passionate rains swept forth
Drenching the helpless earth, when from afar
Rushed through the vasty concave of the dark
Conflicting hosts of cloud battalions, charged
With heaven's red thunder blaze, wakened the roar
Of startled echoes in the slumbering vales.
All now is still; dead still. In quivering heat
The vaulting grasshopper is heard, and now
Like the ecstatic rapture of a soul,
The clear pure song of upward mounting lark
Comes higher and higher, sweeter and clearer yet,



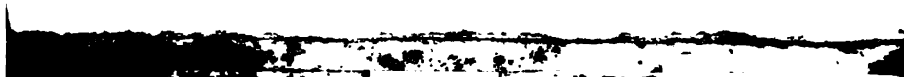
Tremulous with raptured joy. O darling songster!
Let this tired heart rise with thy tiny wings,
To find a refuge in this broad blue heaven.
Higher it soars, still higher, till lost at length
In the bright indistinctness of the noon.
Alone, again alone; this jutting point
Seems like a promontory in vast space,
The boundless ocean of the azure depths,
Seems like a headland, whence the rational thought
May look abroad. The breathing human life
Gathers its mystery; how strange to be,
And in reflective secrecy of thought,
Resolve this varied universal world.
Resolve? Nay, dream. Can other beings dream,
And reason thus? This tiny burnished fly
That lights upon the tilted eye-bright's bloom,

This lichened stone that here perchance hath lain
For centuries, or e'en these couching hills,
Have these existence, through their being streams
The subtle power of universal life ?

Again the wind sweeps past, and hither brings
Tribute to thought. Emerged from silence comes
Scarce heard, the rumble of a railway train,
Softened by distance until it would seem
Itself but as the sound of passing wind,
But that the eye discovers on the plain,
Far off amid the trees, white trail of steam ;
Then with the sound comes there a rush of thought
From man's discordant world. The roar of trade,
The din of commerce, and the clang of work,
Whirring of wheels, and beat of hammer loud,
Seem all foreshortened, and to this slight sound

Reduced. Distance and her twin sister time
Diminish greatness; in the vault of air
Alike the sweetest and the harshest sounds
Are dropped. Our fret, our worry, and our toil,
Objects the greatest that possess the eye,
And overflow the heart, will vanish soon,
Their echoes in the increasing distance hushed,
All faded, lost in insignificance.

Avaunt! intruding sounds, ye have your hour,
Not now, and trumpet forth your challenge loud,
Summoning the eager and o'er-leaping will.
Now is the sabbath of the summer noon,
Let one tired heart bathe in the quiet tide,
The golden quiet of the balmy hour.
O fresh reviving air unblurred by smoke,
That broods and loiters o'er these grassy slopes,



These widely sweeping downs with gentle breath,
How bring'st thou from the cobalt dome above,
Or from far southern lands, from distant leagues
Of cool blue summer seas that placid sleep
'Neath hazy skies and dying distant clouds,
Large draughts of health, and innocent joy of life.
With keen and wide-expanded nostril drink,
Fill the distended chest with ether clear,
Pure life of life, the exhilarating draught.

The musing thought is lost in reverie,
Oblivious in the drowsy warmth, of past
Or future. From the fields below, the sound
Of bird-boy's gun is heard, and clamouring rise
A flock of rooks, circling on shining wing,
And floating high in air, till at some sign,
They sweep from out the field of vision. Now

The irregular tinkle of the sheep-bell comes
From rambling flock. Hard by rise grassy mounds,
Ramparts of some hill-fort of bygone days,
Where clambering sheep browsing scatter around.
With the dull clinking of their leader's bell,
The moving feet, or snuffing 'mid the grass,
Come thoughts of days when this calm landscape wore
Far other guise, when these green rounded hills
Echoed with fearful sounds, and in the plain
The battle shock was heard, shouts of defiance,
The clash of shields and the fierce war horn's blare,
With cries of pain, yells, execrations dire,
And all the dreadful sounds of bloody war.
All ended now! Hushed is the bitterest strife,
Its ravage hidden and its wounds all healed.
Mild nature in her patient gentleness

Lulls the worst sorrow. For the summer wind
The silence of enjoyment softly breaks
To tell the secret lying here enshrined
In dreamy sweetness of the silent noon,
In the deep quiet of the hills, that still
Nature, God's handmaid, in her ministry
Deals kindly, sympathisingly with man.





NATURA MEDICATRIX.

S MELL of the fresh-turned earth cleft by the
plough,
Or resinous fragrance of green-tasselled pines,
Breath from wet dulse strewn upon wave-washed rocks,
Or smell of growth in April's clear-stemmed woods,
How speak ye of the merciful intent,
Gentle benignity of nature's soul,
The obscure but patient tenderness that lulls
Life's sharpest pangs. Contingency foreknown,

The fell mischance, blow of malicious spite,
What gentle makings up for all the loss,
Wear, sore abrasions of this sharp-edged life,
Depressed vitality, the angriness
Of chafed embittered souls. Here in the porch
Of thy most gracious sanctuary, but a pace
From this loud brawling world removed, thou stand'st
With healing lymph, with deep and grateful rest,
Or merciful cloud of blank unconsciousness,
With which thou wrapp'st the shrinking fearful mind,
That from the sounding gloom starts back alarmed,
Dreading the dissipation of life's powers ;
But to the ills that spring from man's hard world,
The hurry, and the worry, and the din,
Unnatural conventionalities,
That crib, confine, and from the jaded life

Wring the last drop of living interest,
Chiefly thou ministerest. There are who yearn
And hunger for the green of fields and woods,
Oft longing through the fevered hurrying cares,
Exactions countless of a busy life,
To fly for refuge from the city's roar,
The endless din of peopled streets, the tides
Of human earnestness, that ebb and flow,
Passion or pleasure, the consuming thirst
Of avarice, ambition's flight oft vain,
From dreary commonness that with its flood
Obliterates the lingering delights
Of nature's sweet and silent processes
Fondly remembered ; to find a respite sweet,
And for awhile the prisoner is free.
No hermit in the torrid wilderness

E'er welcomed in his ecstasy the dreams
That filled the precincts of his rocky cell
With a celestial all-transfiguring light,
Nor lover seized with fonder eagerness
The hour when he should hear again the voice,
Should look upon the face he fondly loved,
Than he who long immured in city streets
Flies from the gloom, the city's murky reek
That blots the beauty of the sun and stars,
Flies as for sanctuary to the silent world
Where nature rules, to find her peace divine,
Drift with the leisureliness of earthly things,
Till the lost sense of childhood comes again,
Simplicity, and innocence, and peace.

Cunning and kind thy hand, O gracious One!
To minister, and in thy secret stores,

Balsams and cordials, anodynes hast thou,
Tonics, elixirs, stored in every wind
That breathes o'er tumbling waves, or roaming sweeps
Blue heathery hills or gorse emblazoned moors,
High shadowed moors that stretch beneath the clouds,
With gleam of water pools, or where aloft
With beckoning arms the fiery smooth stemmed pines
Keep their hoarse conference; true remedies
Most potent for the hurt o'erwearied mind,
Administered so sweetly that relief
Comes ere returning strength begins to flow.

O mighty Mother of unnumbered lives,
A mother's voice is thine, a mother's hand
Lulling the restlessness of sensitive minds
Nor to inaction deep and sluggishness
Committing the quick powers of rational life.

Labour for man is thy great ordinance,
Most salutary, full of cheerfulness,
Of hope, bringer of strength, and doubly armed
To recompense with wealth of energy
The diligent mind, imparting to the will
Fuller command of its submissive powers.
To healthy sleep, thy sweet and patient nurse,
Dost thou entrust thy wounded ones ; to tend,
Re-fill the vessels of the ebbing strength,
Restore, invigorate, to bury deep
In brief forgetfulness the brier-torn soul ;
Thine the bright sunshine, glorious, beautiful,
That makes the world rejoice, that quickens life,
Bathing in golden tide all things that are,
Tanning the brow, and reddening the fresh cheek,
Giving yet brighter lustre to the eye,



Fulness and sense of life. Not more the flowers
That on some southern bank start from their tomb
And wintry sepulchre to hail his beam
And bask in his warm rays, enjoy his light,
Than man oppressed by toil or driven by care
Revels in his bright flood. With nature dwells
For human grief a tender pitifulness,
That with soft hands the sorrowing thoughts sets free
From the dread trouble that with merciless fang
Has seized the trembling soul; hides as it heals,
Lures and engages the afflicted mind,
Mossing the grave and filling with green mould
The sharp-cut epitaph of sorrowing love,
Slowly with cunning fingers that binds up
Most grievous wounds and gives the sufferer ease,
Or by the merciful framing of the soul,

Familiar grown with its hard-featured lot,
Until the mind surprised seizes new vantage,
Redeems its common hours with holiest thoughts,
And takes occasion from each stumbling block
Higher to rise and seek yet loftier ends.





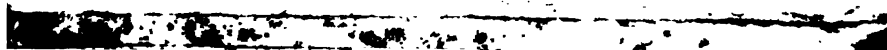
THE MUSIC OF THE RAIN.

TROUBLED dull sky, burdened with coppery
clouds,
Uprolled, or piled on lurid basements dark;
Close, suffocating air that robs of life,
Hushing to deepest silence field and wood,
In expectation dread: these hold the world.
A melancholy wind, wandering as lost,
Goes sighing through the pallid shivering trees.
Then comes a hush in which distincter still

Are heard the woodland sounds, crackle of twig,
Or noisy flap of wing, or wild bird's cry.
Darker each moment grows; the lowering clouds
Drift over all the scene with deepening shade.
The pool is dead, and with its brightness died
The brightness of the verdure of the fields,
And silvered edges of the mounded woods.
Now through the silent cavern of the gloom
Come strange mysterious sounds, mutterings confused,
Low moanings and uncertain whisperings,
As if the spirits of the storm had waked
And incoherent talked. An angry gust
Sweeps 'neath the cloudy heavens, like the loud snort
Of fiery charger hastening to the field.
The poplars bend, the pines give forth their roar;
And from the ravelled edges of the clouds

Are shaken out large spattering drops that splash
Upon the beechen roof: an angry gleam
Of swift blue lightning threads the dusky stems,
Quick followed by the awful thunder's roar,
That breaks o'erhead and rolling far along,
Dies in the distant hills; then stillness comes,
And nought but steady pour of rain is heard;
Again the vengeful spark bites through the gloom;
Again through the rent portals of the clouds
Issues the thunder, with a shattering crash,
As if the solid battlements of heaven
Had fallen in ruins; the widening roar bursts forth
Rumbling with long reverberating roll,
To die in silence o'er this petty world.

The clattering jay screams past on hurrying wing
From out the larches to the hollies' shade;



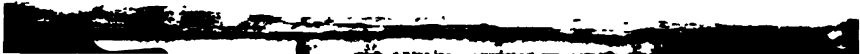
The frightened stoat runs to the woodside bank.
Stillness again, till the impetuous rain
Flung like a knotted scourge by angry heaven,
Smites on the leafy roof, with a loud hiss
As if ten thousand deadly serpents waked.
The air is filled with mist, with steady lines
Of swift down-pouring rain. Th' avenging wind
Unfolds the leafy coverts of the wood,
And slants the arrows of the furious storm.
The clamour deepens. Mighty oaks stretch forth
Their vain protesting boughs 'gainst ashy heaven,
And stoutly wrestle with the ruffian blasts.
A roar as if of agony, a moan
Of helplessness fill all the leafy world.
The branches grind, the shivering up-blown leaves,
Huddled upon the boughs, surge like the sea ;

Full-throated brooks clamour with muddy rage,
While at brief intervals, o'ertopping all,
The bursting thunder swallows up the din.

Now comes a lull: though copious heaven still pours
Its ample flood, but with diminished force,
As whispering to the wide and listening woods,
Now soft and low, then with a quickening speed,
Setting its tale to dead monotony;
Or, busied with its task as if in haste
To deck the pastures with its diamond drops.

There is a music in the tinkling fall,
Soft patter on the leaves and liquid hush:
Whispering beneficence, as if some power,
Impatient of these leafy covertures,
Would search their sweet withdrawing secrecies,
To find the lurking flowers and hiding roots.

Sing on, O summer showers, your passion spent;
The gentle rustle of the grateful leaves
That drink of your beneficence, and cool
Their parching veins in your fresh copious streams,
Tells your blest ministry, your bounty large.
All drink at your pure fount ; the straight red pines,
Rising amid the moist green light of ferns,
Rank above rank until at length they hold
Their windy outpost ; quivering willows gray ;
The lace-like foliage of the silver birch ;
The foxglove's cupola of scarlet bells
Poised in the dusky glade ; or gold-green moss,
Where bright drops glisten on the ashen boles ;
A noise of waters fills the cooler air,
A fresh moist odour all the grateful world.





WILD BLOOM.

WHAT here the casual gossiping winds
have sown,
Wild gardening, in their own sweet negligence,
Blossom, or airy seed borne on light wings,
Have tossed with many a soft caress ringed bine,
Clasper or bramble on their trellis rude,
Lies spread; hither the dawn and dusk have come,
Arrayed in gold, and decked each trembling leaf
With diamond dew, and filled each tiny cup

With nectar ; the hot-breathing noon-day sun,
Leaning his fervid beams for very love,
Has trailed abroad these fragrant drifts of bloom.
Here shoots the lusty life in spire and stem
And nodding plume, tendril, or clear-cut leaf,
Or vagrant spray that swings against the sky,
As though 'twere glad to live. O joy of life !
Fresh moving breeze, blue sky, white drifting clouds,
Great woods sighing and moving in the wind,
That flutters all the hedgerow's quivering leaves.
Beautiful peaceful world ! as bright and sweet
As if it were an Eden new-create,
Not man's dim-shadowed home of care and grief.
All things rejoice, nor can the churlish heart,
Wrapped in its moodiness, refuse to launch
On the glad tide of universal joy.

The hedgerow's living rampart of the fields
Catching the vagrant seed borne of the wind,
Shelters all flowers that in their season blow,
And with their various perfumes fill their world,
Leaf canopied. Here first in sheltered nook,
What time the south wind blows, amid the moss
The primrose opens its rough crumpled leaves,
With blossoms all of innocent surprise ;
White violets come, or their blue sisters peep
Into this cold rough world, shy visitants,
Ere yet the cuckoo pint looks from its spathe,
Amidst its arrowy-headed spotted leaves,
A mimic preacher of the oncoming spring,
When soft the gray spring day with gentle air
Whispers that winter 's passed. The sparrows chirp
Amid the hazels near ; cackle of geese,

Or crow of cock comes from the neighbouring farm.
Where on the hillside the slow-labouring plough,
By two white horses drawn, whisking their tails,
Cleaves the steep furrow, or the harrow throws
Its dust upon the passing wind like smoke.
The rippling music of the lark's sweet ode
Enchants the silence, making yet more sweet
The gentle breathing of the soft spring air,
The sense of freshness, the recovered joy
Of former years that tingles in the blood.
New life is stirring on the sun-kissed bank,
Amid the brighter green of thickening grass,
Or at its foot beside the muddy road,
Where groundsel flowers or white dead nettle blooms,
What time the bleating of the lambs is heard,
And shining buttercups the meadows fill,

The hedgerow in its tangled glory stands.
Among the lowly intermingling growths
Rises at intervals the stately elm
In pillared pride, with corrugated trunk
All lichen-stained, orange, or ashen gray.
Ivy with arrow-headed leaves here climbs,
Stretching its hands as if to reach the sky.
Stage above stage of welcome branching shade,
Pierced here and there with peeps of dazzling blue,
Leads to the ragged crown of dark green leaves.
When the noon sunshine blazes white and fierce
Over the empty fields, making the sound
Of the brown gurgling brook amidst its stones
Most welcome music, in its friendly shade
The panting sheep or dozing cattle lie,
Contented in their warm and drowsy world.

These though the hedgerow's chief supports, not all.
The glistening holly armed on every leaf,
With twisted spines, where by the bill-hook spared,
Shoots upward menacing in its sturdy pride,
Yet with its woodbine like some clinging love
Finding its way to the dark bushy heart,
Picking its dainty course amid the thorns
Up to the crown, clasping both stem and branch
As though it loved its harsh and rugged spouse,
Loved 'mid its spiny wilderness of gloom
To hang its wreaths, and spread its fragrant bloom.
Here too the hazel bushes with rough leaves,
Serrated, downy, throw their vigorous shoots,
Which in due season bear catkins, or bunched
And milky nuts ; a leafy rampart dense,
Impervious but to light, or roving winds.

When apples blossom and the growing grass
Smells sweet and fresh, and all the world seems young,
The hedgerow stands arrayed in its white pride
Of hawthorn flower. Clustering on every spray,
Or massed upon the hedge's thorny roof,
The snowy speckled bloom, creamy and rich,
With nutty perfume fills the neighbouring air,
And with rich freight loads every passing breeze.
This for sweet May. When the red sorrel plumes
And shepherd's clocks hide in the mowing grass,
And the white clover comes to bless the world,
The dog-rose fainting in the summer's noon,
Trails with its delicate-scented petals light,
Pale salmon or faint pink with yellow crown.
When crimson evening's dusk brings evening's dew,
The ravishing fragrance of the sweet briar floats

In wafts upon the air, and tells where lurk
The unsuspected eglantine's rough leaves.
There too the unconsidered bramble blooms,
In its wild freedom, binding fast the hedge
With thorny clasp, a sturdy-natured thing
That holds its leaves against the autumn winds,
Or the severity of winter's frosts.

The days go by; hot, brooding summer days;
The yellow corn gleams over many a stile
And lichen'd gate, or gaps amid the trees;
The clematis shakes forth its feathery plumes;
While hangs the white convolvulus her bells,
Crowding amid the leaves toward the sun.
Hither come shining flies and surly wasps,
And on the umbel of the hemlock find
A spacious world. The dragon fly goes by

All green and gold, with wings invisible,
A glorious creature armed and edged with light,
And coursing up and down poising awhile
Holds moveless to a flower. The grasshopper
Chirps dizzily in the red clover breadths.
The roaming ever restless wind sweeps by
With push and crush, among the higher trees
Wakening the silken hush of beechen leaves,
Or surly roar among the dark-branched firs.
With quickening hum a golden-banded bee
Comes up, swings on the purple succory bloom,
Probing its deep recesses, while anear
Flutters a helpless moth on plain brown wing,
Settling upon the faint pink blackberry flower.
Yet but awhile; the portly bee swings off
Upon the breeze, and booming into silence,

Passes, while, lingering still in sheltered nook,
The frailer moth basks in the sun and spreads
Its dusty wings. No curse of thought is here.

The celandine that with meek trustful gaze
Looks up into this glorious ample sky
With absolute possession of itself,
Seems as it held the present as its own,
The sky its canopy, the world its throne ;
Frail creature at the mercy of a breath !
Now will I look into thine eye, sweet flower.
Tell me the secret of thy pure free life ;
Are other lives so intertwined with thine
That separation brings a double death ?
Feel'st thou time's changes, knowest the mystery
Of death ? What knowest thou of death, sweet flower !
That change severe, a change to which thou yield'st.

Thyself most welcomely, and in the void
Unmurmuring thy distinctive being dropp'st.
Man wrestles still with nature's ordinance,
Vainly, rebelliously. The patient mind
Learns from the multitudinous life around,
Nature's uncounted simple processes,
Submission, and submitting learns to rule ;
Keeps the sweet freshness of a vigorous life,
And growing old, in spirit still grows young.
Here every particle in hedge or field
Struggles to blossom in a fragrant youth,
Ripens, and dying leaves the world unsoiled.



AMONG THE DOWN FERN.

C LIMBING the sandy slope by devious path,
Knee-deep in bracken, while the summer breeze
Fans the hot brow, o'erhead the summer sky,
At length the wide far-sweeping down is reached,
With crackling furze clumps dozing in the sun.
Calm, dead calm ! a moveless pictured world !
Sparse tufts of grass 'mid the warm tawny sand,
Gharled mossy oak roots, creeping, serpent-like,



Pave the near ground. The noon has passed. All clear
The blue hour's light; the moveless shadows sleep.
The bees are busy in the heather bloom,
Storing their liquid wealth for wintry hours,
Peopling the sunny air with murmurous hum,
The wayside camomile with yellow discs
And rays down-pointing, ragged, scents the air
With its faint acid smell. Beyond, the eye
Looks past the sprays of red-stemmed blackberrythorn
With rough-ribbed leaves, to the grey oaken woods,
That from the brow sweep downward to the plain.
There, 'mid the fern, slopes down the sandy lane,
And through the gate of the descending trees
The further scene displays its varied charms:
Patches of corn that for the sickle wait,
Homelands, and meadows, dimly thickening woods

In the blue distance melt in misty air.
On either hand, nearer or more remote
Rise hawthorn bushes, now long stripped of bloom,
Over whose surface honeysuckles climb,
And from their creamy horns pour forth perfume.
Here in its stubborn pride the holly grows,
Mocking at summer, waiting winter's storms.
By the woodside the hazels hold their ground,
The ribbed rough hazels with white leaves upblown.
The wearied ash with pallid upturned leaves
Frets in the breeze, like some poor restless mind.
Trouble is on the grey green oaken woods
That cannot slumber, sighing o'er buried grief.
Cloudless the sky, a roof of tenderest blue,
The limping linnet liting overhead
Is here and gone. An orange velvet bee

Swings underneath the blossoming heather spray,
Then, freeing itself, on straight-directed wing,
Flies to the neighbouring bank burying itself
Deep in the spotted foxglove's bell. The fern
Laughs as the wind whispers its secret low,
And all the assenting heather blossoms nod.
Here, all around, a busy little world
Spends its small life. An ant hill is at hand,
And the red ants now hurrying through the grass
Mount on the loftier blades and wave aloft,
As if in anger, their antennæ frail.
Others with burdens laden struggle on,
Missing their path, as in this larger world
Of busy man, full oft. A fern's broad frond
Shelters their mimic capital from sun
Or rain, whilst next the wind, a purple blaze,

The heather spray in bloom. A forest vast,
Like that which centuries since in this rude isle
Kept savage tribes asunder. Yet, to these
Small emmets, all the natural powers discharge
Like functions as to creatures bulkier made,
Yea, e'en to man himself. The golden sun
Shines with all vivid power, the sable night
Blots out their tiny doings for awhile,
The wind blows with its healthful ministry,
The silent dew beneath night's canopy
Brings its pellucid nectar, decks each spore
Of velvet moss, grass blade, or tiny bud
Of heather bloom with liquid gems as freely
As it affuses the vast sighing woods.
Yet in this puny world care finds a place.
The shining-headed bee marauding brings

A tempest with its wings, or yellow wasp
With surly menacing drone, invades their land.
Or when the night calls forth fresh enemies,
And the cold blind worm creeps about their realm,
Gray spinners arming through the blades of grass,
Or staring horned snails drag slimy tracks,
And bring disaster to their commonwealth.
Or frisking rabbit in the evening's dusk,
Tears with its claws their burrowed citadel;
Or casual drift of wind with slanting power
A deluge to them in a rain drop brings.
The ungainly straggling gorse with withered arms
And deep green spiky shade shuts in their world.



THE IDYLL OF THE DUSK.

THE western sky burns with a crimson haze,
Suffused, deepening to purple lake, between
The gateway of the hills, a crystal flood,
An ever-moving sea of amber light
That stretches upward to the awful blue
Of the oncoming night. Clouds are there none,
Save those that breathe of absolute repose,
Level and still, drawn out at either end,



The Idyll of the Dusk.


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Floating in golden umber tinged blood-red.
Dusk on the distant quiet hills ; a haze
Smoky and blue, that slow encloses round
With peaceful arms the hot o'erwearied world,
Blurring the landscape ; o'er the cornfields dusk,
On tented stucks and on the half-formed ricks,
Dusk on the village and its rich brown roofs,
On cottage porches where the sweet pea blooms
And the white rose to dormer windows climbs,
Or starry jessamine. The dancing gnats
Begin their thin faint pine ; the robin's song
Clear, sweet, and forcible in every note,
Comes from the wheelwright's elms, above the hives
Whose drowsy murmurs buzzing die to rest.
Among the straw-yard ricks the sparrows chirp.
Out in the golden west, far off, the caw

Of rooks floating above the darkening trees
Sounds indistinct; voices of children now,
The laugh, expostulation, merry shout,
Are heard dying away; lowing of cattle
Tells from the fields that milking time has come.
Blue smoke from cottage chimnies upward curls,
And slowly drifts upon the windless air.
Along the road the satchelled workmen come
Homeward, plodding with tired deliberate step.
The sound of horses' hoofs and grind of wheels
Come nearer, soon again in distance lost.
The solitary crow, on lagging wing,
Makes for the wood. Stirring the drowsing elms
The breeze awakes. The damp is on the grass.
Baaing of sheep and bark of shepherd's dog
Tell of the flock's return. Upon the common

The village lads use the last light, and crack
Of cricket ball is heard. The donkeys browse,
Kicking, or switching ever restless tails ;
While cattle cropping near with snuffing breath
Lick up the grass, twitching their ears. O'erhead
The buzz of insects round the lime tree sounds
Like far off fairy bells. The drone goes by
Of bee zigzagging on its homeward way.
The whistling swallows fly high in the air.
Now quiet creeping mists the valleys fill ;
The pool gleams white and clear beneath the sky,
The light fades off ; darker and darker grow
The blue black hills against the western glow,
Soft clear and pure. Hedgerows and trees grow black
With deepening shades. Now on the tower and spire
And glimmering western windows of the church

Lingers the light, and the white tombstones near,
In village churchyard, whisper of the dead.
A deeper hush each moment falls, a peace
Unbroken, absolute, as not of earth.
Day's expectation dies: nought now remains
But night's oblivion; fainter all sounds,
Dreamlike and sluggish, then, silence profound.
 Again a stir; the expiring life revives
And throbs in yet a few uncertain sounds.
The fitting rustle of quick-turning bats,
Or chirp of crickets; from the road, scarce seen,
The wheels of heavy-laden wagon sound,
Labouring thick muffled through the summer dust,
Or trot of horse's hoofs along the road,
Break through the brooding quiet of the dusk.
The wind awakes and sighs amid the trees



O'erhead, fluttering almost inaudibly
The leaves. Fragrance of new-mown hay from barn,
Or hayrick near, or breath of cows, or smell
Of fresh-cropped grass, hangs on the air, or dust
Laid by the dew. The flickering moth is out
Along the hedgerows, while between the elms
Quivers the restless bat. The beetle's drone
Goes by. All timidly the stars peep forth,
From the soft golden sky. Fading, dying,
The earth falls back in arms of drowsy night.
The church clock strikes the hour that tells day's close,
With quivering sound the lingering last note dies.

THE END.



1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58. 59. 60. 61. 62. 63. 64. 65. 66. 67. 68. 69. 70. 71. 72. 73. 74. 75. 76. 77. 78. 79. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85. 86. 87. 88. 89. 90. 91. 92. 93. 94. 95. 96. 97. 98. 99. 100.



